

# MESOPOTAMIAN MINUTE

*- Current News on Agriculture & USDA in Iraq -*  
**Office of Agricultural Affairs, U.S. Embassy, Baghdad**

Sunday, August 15, 2010

**Continued Engagement with Baghdad Zoo** - On July 31, USDA conducted another visit to the Baghdad Zoo. The visit was led by LTC “Doc” Torgerson, a zoo veterinarian, former zoo director, and the Deputy Team Leader at PRT Muthana. Topics discussed included continuing education and networking for the zoo director and veterinarians, veterinary capacity and equipment available, and zoo design. One tiger cub that was quite sick at the last visit in late June, has responded nicely to treatment, and is playful and active. Unfortunately, the zoo lost a chimpanzee in the interim but two new tiger cubs were born. The United States has invested heavily to refurbish the zoo and even donated tigers in 2007.



**Women-Oriented Animal Breeding Training** – On July 24<sup>th</sup> the USDA Agricultural Advisor in Kirkuk kicked off of the Women’s Artificial Insemination Veterinary Initiative. The three week program trains 26 private women veterinarians working directly with women farmers on such issues as; hygienic milk collection, antibiotic withdrawal periods and artificial insemination. Women do most of the actual milking on small farms in Iraq and female veterinarians provide accessible animal health and breeding services. This program also supports other U.S. Government-supported micro dairy programs in Kirkuk.

**PRT Baghdad, Local Groups Support 4-H Clubs** – The week of August 2, PRT Baghdad South brought together key figures in local government and business to talk about ways to further support these programs for children, including a national 4-H program. 4H is an international organization with clubs in 81 countries. The clubs are coached by local parents, funded by local businesses and run by the children themselves. As part of a recently established local 4-H program supported by PRT Baghdad South, children have visited local museums, planted trees, learned basic animal husbandry, and taken computer courses.



4-H club members plant trees

**Private Rice Sale** – During the week of August 9, USDA/Baghdad supported a private sale of U.S. long grain rice. Iraq’s state-owned Grain Board has purchased \$73 million in U.S. rice so far in the first six months of 2010. While rice imported by the Iraqi government is given away for free as part of a national food supplement program, there is nonetheless a growing private market for high quality rice. Iraq imports about 90% of its rice consumption.

**Personnel Update-** There are currently 35 USDA personnel in Iraq including those with Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), at Embassy Baghdad or embedded with U.S. military units.